

THE CHRONICLES OF JEREMY

The Girl in the Fur Coat

IN Palm Tree court there is no palm tree, as every one acquainted with the Temple knows. Personally I doubt if there ever was a palm tree there, although Sir John Saunders, the oldest inhabitant of the court, declares it stood on the spot where the stone flags incline to the small drain which carries off the rain water. To hear him talk you would think he had seen the tree, which is ridiculous, and I only mention his opinion because the drain happens to be opposite the door of No. 5, and on the third floor of that building I happen to live.

This may appear a roundabout way of introducing myself; possibly you will find the method characteristic of men. Barristers, waiting for briefs and recognition, often take to the pen to keep themselves going, but I never had any inclination this way, let alone the ability, so now that it has fallen to my lot to set down these chronicles they suffer naturally at the hands of a novice. At any rate you have gathered that I am a barrister and briefless.

It is a fortuitous wind which drifts most of us into our particular rut in life, and I think I must have been blown into the wrong rut. My father's idea that because there were many solicitors in the family a barrister ought to have an excellent opportunity, had not worked out. Several of my legal relations died about the time I was called, and the others preferred to take their business to some one who had no connection with the family. I do not blame them; I would sooner deal with strangers myself. Their neglect did not trouble me greatly. I had enough to make two ends meet, and, to be candid, my youth longed for more strenuous adventure than I was likely to find in the law courts. I lacked the energy to get out of my groove and seek adventure, but I was quite ready to welcome it if it came to me. And it did. It came knocking at my door in the most unexpected and startling manner.

I am metaphorical when I say adventure knocked at my door; as a fact, it began at my window, half an hour after breakfast—not a very early meal on this particular morning, by the way. It was late March, the first touch of spring was in the air, and, having lighted a cigarette, I threw open my window and looked out. Palm Tree court is not a beauty spot. The buildings are too high to admit of much sunlight. Entrance at one end is through a short tunnel; at the other there are three arches, which we call the colonnade end. It requires a little imagination if you have ever seen a real colonnade. This morning there was as much sunlight as ever got into the court, but it was the girl going toward the colonnade which lent it especial grace and beauty. She wore a long brown fur coat and a tongue to match; not a particularly distinguishing costume, because a lot of girls were wearing these coats just then, but there was something which differentiated her from others. There was an elasticity in her step, a swing of her body, which attracted me; it was not merely the fact that she was the only girl in the world visible at the moment. The opening of my window had made a noise, I suppose, and she glanced up. Of course, I was looking at her from an angle and from the height of a third floor, but I got the impression that she was pretty. As she entered the colonnade she looked up again, smiled, and gave a little wave of her hand, in which she carried her glove. I can almost hear the thought passing through the minds of some people. Not a nice type of girl, they argue, but, remember, it was the first touch of spring. It was in my blood. I jumped to the conclusion it was also in hers, and thought no harm. I had to change my coat and put on my shoes, but only a few moments elapsed before I was rushing down the stairs. On the bottom flight I met an elderly gentleman coming up—it would perhaps be more correct to say I just missed him in my hasty descent.

"Is there a Mr. Anderson in this building?" he asked as I went past him.

"Second floor, but he hasn't been here for months." I called back over my shoulder.

I ran as far as the Temple Church, then halted, wondering whether the girl had gone up to Fleet street or down toward Paper Buildings and King's Bench walk. I suppose I had an idea that, having waved, she would linger and give me a chance of catching her, and I was disappointed.

I hurried into Fleet street, glanced westward and cityward, and it seemed as if fur coats and toques were no longer being worn. There was not a girl in sight who was so dressed. Then walking quickly along Fleet street as far as Mitre court, I went through to King's Bench walk, and was remarked. She must have waited somewhere after all, and was now going in the direction of the gateway which leads into Tudor street. There is little of the bold Lothario about me, and it never occurred to me that she would resent my having followed her. That wave of her hand had been an invitation to do so; the spring in the March morning was an excuse for unconventionality. Hearing me close behind her she stopped and turned.

"Are you following me?" she asked. "No, that is—I beg your pardon."

I am not sure whether she smiled, but if she did there was no invitation to continue the adventure. She was handsome rather than pretty, and on closer inspection she appeared to lack something which she seemed to possess when viewed from my third floor window. Only distance and the angle had lent her piquancy. She did not look like a girl in whose blood there was a tingling for adventure. After looking at me steadily for a moment she went toward Tudor street, and I took out a cigarette and tried not to look like the fool I felt. Two or three men were crossing King's Bench walk, but I came to the conclusion that none of them had taken any notice of the encounter.

I walked slowly back into Fleet street, remembering, now it was too late, how much more effectively I might have answered her question. Why had she waved to me? Had I been a little bolder the encounter might have ended differently, yet somehow I was not altogether sorry it had not done so. I had been attracted by the girl I thought she was not by the girl herself, and it was the girl of my fancy which kept the spirit of adventure alive in me, making a return to the seclusion of my chambers impossible at present.

I lunched up west, at a little Bohemian place in Soho, and drank half a bottle of wine to try and convince myself that I was grasping enjoyment. I do not suppose any girl in a brown fur coat escaped my scrutiny, for a kind of obsession possessed me that the girl I had fancied must materialize. I was out for adventure, was prepared for it, and not a ghost of one came over my horizon to disturb the commonplace. About 4 o'clock I went to Palm Tree court in a state of dejection.

I entered the court through the tunnel, almost running into a loiterer there as I did so. I saw two men at open windows, and a horrible suspicion came to me that the girl of the morning had been waving to some one else and that the court gossip had already proclaimed that I had made an ass of myself. Old Sir John Saunders was on his doorstep, and to avoid being drawn into conversation by him I pretended I was in a hurry. I entered my room, pushed the door to behind me, and then stood staring into a corner. The carpet had been turned back, and a bit of the flooring was missing. Some one had been there during my absence and—What had he been doing? I went and looked into the hole. It was some sort of a secret hiding place, made for the purpose, and was empty save for a few scraps of paper, a piece of cloth and a small strip of leather.

"By Jove! Here is adventure after all," I said aloud.

"Mr. Burford Yates, I think."

I swung round, suddenly conscious of danger. A man was standing by the door into my bedroom, and I recognized something familiar about him. An instant later I knew he was the man I had met on the stairs that morning.

"Yes, my name is Yates, but who are you?"

"Screed—Jeremy Screed," was the answer.

"And what the deuce have you been doing here?" I asked, pointing to the hole.

"My name is not familiar to you?" he asked. "Astounding! The ignorance gives you away. You must be a barrister with nothing to do. Idle hands and the devil—you know the proverb. That hole? Like that when I came in. Wanted to see what you thought of it, so stayed. Rather wondered whether you would come back at all, you were in such a hurry this morning."

He jerked out his sentences in a disconnected fashion, suggestive of cheap clockwork which was running down.

"You do not tell me who you are," I said.

"And you don't explain why you were in such a hurry this morning."

"I have no intention of doing so."

"Expect you'll have to. First of all, I must ask you to come down and see Mr. Anderson. He is—waiting for you to see him."

"I don't know him."

"Not by sight?"

"I have met him on the stairs once or twice, but he hasn't been here for months."

"He has come back. I expect he will explain why I am here."

Screed closed the door of my chambers as we went out, and spoke of the weather as we went down the stairs. I wanted to resent his manner, but was too interested in him, and the adventure, to do so. He was a personality you instinctively wanted to study. He might be a burglar, trusting to bluff, and, although I went with him meekly enough, I was prepared to put up a fight if necessary.

He knocked at Anderson's door, which was opened immediately. Although it was still daylight, heavy curtains drawn across the windows shut it out, and the electric light was switched on.

"We've come to see Mr. Anderson," said Screed to the man who opened the door. "Ever been in these chambers before, Mr. Yates?"

"Never."

"No one been here for months, the porter says, and he ought to know. There, Mr. Yates."

He had shepherded me across the room, and as he spoke he whisked a sheet from a chest of drawers which was pushed back against a wall. I stopped with a half-strangled cry in my throat. Lying there was a man—dead, murdered. He had been stabbed in the neck.

"Does Mr. Anderson explain why I am here?" Screed asked, after a pause. I did not answer immediately. I looked at him, then at the dead man again, and unpleasant ideas rushed into my brain. Here was an adventure I could easily have done without.

"A detective," I said, slowly. I began to have a vague impression that I had heard the name of Screed before—had seen it in a newspaper, perhaps.

"That's the position," he answered. I bent down to look at the dead man, to look closely into his face.

"That is not Anderson," I said.

"Look at him again. Violent death alters the aspect of a man."

"That is not Anderson," I repeated.

"Very curious," said Screed, taking a case from his pocket. "That is a photograph of Anderson—authentic. Seems to me it is the picture of the man lying there."

"Yes, but it is not Anderson," I answered.

"An interesting point," he said, replacing the sheet and the case. "We must argue it out. Shall it be here or upstairs?"

"In my chambers," I said.

He said something which I could not catch to the man as he opened the door for us, and we went upstairs in silence. Screed took my most comfortable chair without invitation.

"First suggestion," he said. "Draw the curtains and switch on the light. Prevents people in the opposite houses getting too interested."

I complied.

"Second suggestion. Don't tell me anything you don't want me to repeat. Talking to me is sometimes like talking into a gramophone."

"Look here, Mr. Screed, are you thinking that I killed the man downstairs?"

"Suggestion three. Should advise you to tell me everything you know."

"You do not answer my question," I returned.

"Suggestion four. Don't expect it. I hardly ever do answer questions. Spend most of time asking them. If you haven't smoked all your cigarettes I'll have one."

I passed him my case.

"Egyptians, and you usually smoke Virginian by the ends on the hearth. Dined out last night and ran short. That is rather interesting to me, Mr. Yates."

"I fail to understand why."

"Perhaps naturally, perhaps not. My profession is full of uncertainties only to be met by careful method. My method is always the same. I always fix on one person and radiate from him until I hit the truth. Works excellently. Sometimes the person I originally fix on is the truth. In this case I have fixed on you. See?"



LYING THERE WAS A MAN—DEAD, MURDERED.

I laughed, but felt uncomfortable. I defy any one not to feel a shiver down his spine when Screed shot out suggestions of this kind.

"You see the idea, Mr. Yates. The first questions which come into my mind are: 'What did you do last night, and why were you in such a hurry this morning?' That hole might be the answer to both questions."

"It isn't," I said. "I will tell you why I was in a hurry this morning."

"No. It may help things a bit if I tell you," Screed returned. "You were smoking at your window when a girl in a fur coat passed through the court and waved to you. A signal, eh, Mr. Yates?"

"A signal!"

"May I ask if you have had a pleasant day?"

"No."

"Then my third suggestion. Tell me all you know."

I told him exactly as I have set it down here. Further, I explained that I had dined alone last night, had gone to the theater, and, meeting an acquaintance, had gone back to his rooms in Bury street to play cards for an hour or so.

"Do you often do that kind of thing?"

"I am out a great deal."

"Constantly home late, eh?"

"Yes. I am often at my club until late—the Oriental."

"So that if any one wanted to come and look at that hole during the evening he might fairly calculate on your not being in?"

"I do not live by rule, and any one would run considerable risk by entering my chambers uninvited."

"He might knock first," said Screed. "He might be some one you know, Mr. Anderson, for instance, and therefore not make you suspicious if you happened to be in."

"The dead man is not Mr. Anderson," I said.

"Well, you might have a visit from the gentleman you know as Mr. Anderson. It would interest me to hear about him."

"I do not know him. I have met him on the stairs once or twice and seen him unlook his door. He was only about for two or three weeks. The porter could tell you more about him than I can."

"How long is it since you have seen him?" Screed asked.

"Seven or eight months."

Screed was thoughtful for a few minutes.

"Now, about this girl. What kind of a girl was she? Something very special surely to make you tumble down the stairs in such a hurry."

"She was disappointing on closer

inspection and not at all pleased to find I was following her."

"Then why did she invite you by waving?"

"I didn't discuss the matter with her. I just accepted the position, and put my tail between my legs."

"Are you sure she waved?"

"Quite. She was carrying her glove in her hand. Of course, it is possible she was waving to some one else."

"Oh, no; it was to you, all right."

"How do you know?"

"From information received," and he laughed. "Would you know the girl again?"

"Do you mean close to or from my window?"

"Close to."

"Yes."

"You have more confidence in your-

self than I have in Jeremy Screed, which is saying a lot. She did no glove waving when you spoke to her?"

"No. She kept her hands in her muff."

"You are observant, Mr. Yates. You will have to come and help me when I get into difficulties—that is, if I can get you off this time. Were they brown gloves?"

"I couldn't swear to that."

"But the coat and muff were brown."

"Yes."

"That color?" And Screed suddenly held out a tuft of brown fur to me.

"Something of that color, but I am not going to swear to that either."

"This tuft was found in the hand of the dead man," Screed went on, "presumably pulled from the muff or cloak in a death struggle. You did not happen to notice whether there was a piece missing when you stood close to the girl?"

"I did not."

"Well, Mr. Yates, that is all for the present," said Screed, rising. "You will be asked a lot more questions at the police court tomorrow, no doubt. There is no harm in your putting on a thick coat, although I do not think you will find your cell particularly cold tonight."

"Cell?"

"Sorry, but you are under arrest. I have two men on the landing and a revolver in my hip pocket. Take my advice and be philosophical."

As a man I found Screed rather amusing; as a detective he was evidently a dismal failure. He had not only got hold of the wrong dead man, but the wrong living one as well. I was not much interested in the dead man, but my own position was startling and unpleasant. My mind was suddenly full of all the cases of mistaken justice I had ever heard of.

At the hearing next day I was bound to admit that Screed had got some excuse for his mistake. The porter of Palm Tree court, who had received more tips from me than I could afford, did not say very much, but he left the impression that I was a man of irregular habits. The way he put it almost convinced me that I was. Until that moment I had never seen myself as others saw me. The porter also swore to the dead man being Anderson, and when I asked what other person had a key to Mr. Anderson's rooms he declared

REMY SCREED

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF STORIES

BY PERCY JAMES BREBNER

that I could not possibly have seen any one entering them. I imagine that every one present, from the magistrate downward, assumed I had looked upon the wine when it was red.

But there was worse evidence against me. A man, quite a young fellow, up from the country, stated that he had come to find a Mr. Wicklow at No. 14 Palm Tree court. He had evidently been given the wrong court for the name was not known there. He was coming down the stairs of No. 14, and was on the first landing when, looking from the window, he saw a girl in a brown fur coat come out of the house opposite. At the time he did not notice it was No. 5. She went to the colonnade end and made a signal to a man who had opened an upper window. He recog-



nized me as the man. The girl passed through the colonnade. He watched for a moment from the landing window, rather amused by the little romance, then came down the stairs. As he came along the passage to the door he saw a gentleman, whom he now knew to be Screed, and who had come from the other end of the court, enter the house opposite. The next minute I rushed out and went in pursuit of the girl. The recital served to strain my character further.

Screed's evidence was scrappy. He did not repeat a word of our conversation, nor did he mention the hole in the floor of my chambers. What he did say, however, was sensational. For some time past search had been made on the continent, and in this country, for a gang of thieves and blackmailers. Their operations were extensive and miscellaneous in character, extending at times to well paid spy work. It was only lately that any real clues regarding the members of this gang had been picked up, and it was discovered that a woman was a very prominent member of it. An unexpected communication had been received from a Mr. Anderson of Palm Tree court saying he was in possession of certain information which would be useful to the authorities, and on the morning in question Screed had called at the time appointed. He had met me rushing wildly down the stairs. When he went to Mr. Anderson's chambers he could get no answer, and when, with the help of the porter, he had got in, it was only to find Mr. Anderson lying dead upon the floor.

On the conclusion of his statement an adjournment was asked for as it was expected that further evidence would be forthcoming. I was removed in custody, and it was difficult to realize that I did not deserve it. There are times when it is not easy to believe in your own innocence.

It was dark when my cell door opened and Screed came in.

"Hope you're not too comfortable, Mr. Yates, to object to a night out."

"More evidence to be knotted about me?" I asked.

"Can't say how it will work out exactly, but at any rate it may afford you a little excitement."

"Excitement!" and I laughed, and as we walked away from the station I told Screed how I longed for adventure. The idea seemed to amuse him.

mal aspect, and yet we may find adventure."

"I have already had more than I bargained for."

"Then, don't be selfish. I am still unsatisfied."

Before you reach the tunnel leading into the court there is a large block of chambers, and taking my arm Screed drew me into the entrance.

"Quiet, and go lightly. Don't behave as if you were a criminal."

We went to the top floor, meeting no one. A narrow door, which was unlocked, gave on to the roof, a medley of slates and tiles pitched at various angles, with flat spaces between them.

"Follow me," said Screed. "There is no difficulty to overcome."

With several twists he led me over the roofs until we came to a door similar to the one of our exit. Entering this, we were facing a flight of stairs with a right angle turn in it.

"Not a word now," whispered Screed. "You'll see where you are in a moment."

We went down to the angle of the stairs, and into a deep recess there. Then I understood. We were in No. 5, and from this recess looked down upon the door of my chambers. Screed's arm pressed me back against the wall, and we waited in silence.

I was growing stiff, and think I must have dozed off in my upright position before anything happened. Screed gave me a warning touch, and I heard stealthy steps on the stairs below. A man came to the door of my chambers, put a key in the lock, apparently without the slightest hesitation, and entered. He did not quite close the door after him, and I saw the light of an electric torch flash within. Then came a short exclamation, and almost immediately he came out. Evidently something was not as he had expected, and he closed the door quietly, moving even more stealthily than he had done before. For an instant he flashed the light down the stairs, and Screed, fearing, no doubt, that he would flash it upward, pressed me back against the wall of the recess. In that instant I had recognized the intruder. He was the young man who had looked for Mr. Wicklow in No. 14, and had seen me rush after the girl in the fur coat. Apparently it was only from below he feared pursuit, for he came up toward us without flashing the light, passed, and before I had quite realized the fact, had disappeared through the narrow door on to the roof.

"Interesting, eh, Mr. Yates? He was surprised to find that hole in your floor open and empty."

"What was there?" I asked.

"That is one of the things I want to find out," he answered.

We went down the stairs and left by Palm Tree court. Just beyond the tunnel, by the door where the porter had his rooms, a policeman was standing.

"Been and gone, sir," he replied in answer to Screed's question. "I explained that it was his night off."

The time had seemed much longer than it really was. We were back in the police station long before midnight.

I was brought up again only to be discharged and receive apologies for the mistake which had been made. The young man who had entered my chambers and was present in court seemed surprised, and when the porter was brought in between two constables he became suddenly excited. I suppose he thought the porter had betrayed him, and before any one could interfere he had whipped out a revolver and fired, wounding the porter in the arm. He was seized and overpowered before he could fire a second time, which he evidently intended to do.

"Take a good look at him, Mr. Yates," said Screed. "We shall have to have a talk about him in a day or two when we have got a little more out of the porter."

It was in a retired tea shop in a turning off Chancery lane that this conversation took place.

"Regular haunt of mine," Screed explained. "Know me here and ask no questions whatever I do. Make use of them at times, too. Often get information. It is run by a lady—Betty Cameron. Introduce you to her before we leave. Charming. You'll like her. Now for tea and business."

It was a long story, made longer by Jeremy Screed's desire to impress his personality upon me. I will be more concise. It was impossible to say how many people were concerned in the gang of thieves, but Anderson was one, the porter another, and also the young man, who was a Frenchman, born in England. His real name was probably Le Maitre, but he had a dozen others. For months Anderson had been on the continent, his address and appearance being a great asset to the gang. His chambers in Palm Tree Court, al-

ways under the eye of the porter, were the London center of the gang, and a safe depository for stolen property. Who would suspect a barrister's chambers? It was one of the gang I had seen there and imagined it was Anderson, who had evidently never been there in my time. In case of danger there was another way over the roof. For some unknown reason Anderson appeared to have made up his mind to turn traitor, possibly believing that justice was on the heels of the gang and anxious to save his own skin. He wrote to the authorities, making the appointment which Screed kept. His purpose, however, was discovered by some of his companions, and Le Maitre came to England to silence him. With the porter's connivance he secreted himself in Anderson's chambers the night before and awaited his arrival.

"The murder was committed in the morning, probably while you were at breakfast," Screed went on, "and now comes in that curious arm of coincidence which so often plays an important part in life. The murderer was ready to escape when, watching for the opportune moment from Anderson's window, he saw the girl in the fur coat go through the court and wave to an upper window. His story was very accurate, remember. The girl gave him an idea for covering his own trail—he could throw suspicion on her and, as he afterward discovered, on you. His story was a little too accurate, because after investigation of No. 14 I found he could not have seen all he said he did from there. At the last moment he had to alter his plans, because he saw me come into the court and walk toward No. 5. Guessing who I was, and what my business was, he knew he must be trapped unless he got away quickly, so he ran upstairs before you had start-

ed your pursuit, and escaped by the roof. Had you been a few moments earlier you would have had the surprise of your life."

"Why?"

"You will understand directly. Our friend didn't give up his plan altogether. He realized that justice was closer at his heels than he had imagined, and he was very loath to lose the chance of laying a false scent. He may have waited to see you rush from your chambers, seeing you from the recess as we saw him the other night, and, knowing something of the character of Mr. Burford Yates from the porter, probably he hurried round to King's Bench Walk to make use of you if he could. He was not disappointed. He found you had gone in pursuit."

"He saw me?"

"He spoke to you."

"You are wrong. No one—"

"In life it is dangerous to be too certain of anything. There were two women in fur coats that morning. He was the second one. It was as a woman he had waited for Anderson; it was as a woman he had become notorious in the gang. The porter has confessed it. I suspected something of the kind when you told me your tale. Your observation of the glove in the hand, and later of the hands kept in the muff, was very useful. You will have to help me again Mr. Yates."

"Then you arrested me merely as a blind?"

"I don't admit that, of course, but you can draw your own conclusions. In my profession one has to think ahead. That is why I said nothing in my evidence about the hole in the floor."

"Tell me about that," I said.

"It has probably been there since Palm Tree Court was built, but was forgotten until the porter discovered

it before you took the chambers. Schemers invariably get periods of nervousness—often that is why they are caught—and these men, for some reason or other, became nervous of keeping all their eggs in one basket. Some of the spoils were removed from Anderson's chambers to yours. It was possible for the porter to come to your chambers at any time. If you happened to be in he could easily give some excuse for coming. I did not suspect him at first, and while I was telephoning for the police I sent him for a doctor. He slipped round and over the roof. Jewels were in that hole, and he wanted to save something out of the wreck. I banked on the idea that Le Maitre would try the same stunt. Your arrest made him feel safe. When he found the jewels gone he naturally concluded that the porter had stolen a march on him, hence the shooting. Desperate fellow that Frenchman. He very nearly fixed you with the crime. Lucky for you that the case was in my hands."

"Are you quite sure of your facts?" I asked with a slight sneer at his self-complacency.

"Quite. Now come and be introduced to Betty Cameron."

We went into an inner room. In a fur coat and toque the girl who had waved to me rose to greet us.

"The arm of coincidence, Mr. Yates. Betty, dressed as she is now, happened to walk through the court that morning. She told me so three days ago."

"I was on my way to see a solicitor in Dr. Johnson's buildings," she said.

"That accounts for my not catching you," I returned.

"I did not expect you to try?"

"Then why did you wave?"

"Spring madness I suppose," and she laughed.

(Copyright, 1920.)

AN ATRIUM THAT WENT WRONG

(Continued from Third Page.)

have money in the bank and a whole lot of liberty bonds and war saving stamps? They'd just go right ahead with the wedding, rent or buy a little place somewhere out in the suburbs, and Roland could start right in as a decorator. And when his fame had spread from Bar Harbor to Pasadena and he was sought out by all the wealthy and great, perhaps Uncle Peter would be sorry. So they had come to Rockhurst, and—well, I knew the rest. They would write to Uncle Peter at once.

"Better put in all the details," I suggested, "about the interest and everything, and how the hard-hearted owner threatens to foreclose."

My guess was that Uncle Peter would simply snort and toss the letter into the waste basket. That is, if he still remembered Roland. But it was a good chance for me to take. I didn't want to turn 'em out, and I wasn't anxious to get the place back. I waited a week before droppin' around again and I wasn't surprised to hear that no word had come.

"He may be off on a business trip," suggests Roland. "If you could give us a week or two more—"

"All right," says I. "Call it two."

Then the next day, which was Sunday, I happens to be down to the station with the roadster lookin' for a friend of Sadie's who must have missed her connections or something, and as I'm about to leave I gets the hail from this ruddy-faced, chunky-built old party in the loud-checked suit.

"Say," he demands, "where do the Poodles live out here?"

"Poodles?" says I. "I don't know of any but four-legged ones. You don't mean—"

"No, no!" he breaks in. "Not poodle dogs, though one of 'em is what I'd call a young puppy. Human Poodles. Young married couple. Name's something like that. Or maybe it's Pootle."

"How about Pottle?" says I.

"That's it! Pottle," says he. "He's a lanky, shingle-cheeked freak with long hair. Lets on to be some kind of an artist."

"Uh-huh!" says I. "Roland Pottle. Some friend of his, are you?"

"I'll be hanged if I am," says he.

"I'm his wife's uncle, though."

"Oh, yes!" says I. "Uncle Peter. Climb right in and I'll take you down there. Guess they're kind of lookin' for you."

"Huh!" says he. "They are, are they? Well, we'll see. I've got this far, anyway. No fool like an old one, you know. Swore I'd never go near 'em. He's no earthly good, that Pottle. What Vera could see in him is too much for me. But I used to think a

lot of Vera. She—she's all I've got left. Didn't think I'd miss her so much. But I do. Nowhere to go Sunday afternoons. You know. I can stand it through the week. Business. But on Sunday—well, I got lonesome. Must see Vera once more. I hear they're not getting on well financially. I could have told her that. Any one could, after one look at that Pottle. But she's my niece, all the same. Ought to look 'em up, I suppose."

"I think you'll find the latch-string out," says I.

Wish I could have been in on that reunion, but all I saw of it was a glimpse of Vera as she opens the front door and discovers Uncle Peter examining scornful the slim cedars. The affair must have had a happy endin', though, for bright and early Monday mornin' I gets a phone call from Roland askin' me snappy if I could stop in soon and go over a little business matter with him. I made it that evenin', and what does he greet me with but a wave-lined blue slip with Uncle Peter's autograph on it under a four-figure amount.

"M-m-m-m!" says I through my teeth. "That's what I call some uncle. Going to take over the property himself, is he?"

"Oh, yes," says Roland. "It's a mere trifle to him."

"And he's going to do something else for us," adds Vera. "He wouldn't tell me just what, but I'm sure it will be something nice. He's rather an old dear, Uncle Peter."

"I wonder what he's planning, though," says Roland, wrinkl'n his pasty brow.

He found out a few days later when a truck load of furniture from a Brooklyn department store backed up and a lady flat fitter begun bossin' the job of uncratin' the stuff. Course, it was all over by the time I got around to callin' with the deed. I discovers Roland and Vera wanderin' dazed in the midst of this collection of near-mahogany rockers, stuffed easy chairs, onyx-topped tables and so on.

Uncle Peter sure hadn't stinted himself when he did the orderin'. If he'd measured the floor space and then bought enough to cover it he couldn't have made a much closer guess. He'd left mighty little margin for movin' about. Yes, there was all the furniture two people could possibly use, even if they was furniture addicts. As for the color scheme, Uncle Peter hadn't bothered with that. He'd picked a davenport upholstered in bright blue velvet, set it off with a red leather armchair and added a willow rocker painted a vivid green. Then for good measure he'd thrown in a coupe of big rugs with a sprawly flower design and a half a dozen cheerful-toned oil paintings in wide gold frames.

"Just look what has happened to our lovely atrium!" moans Vera.

"You could almost hang out the S. R. O. sign, couldn't you?" says I.

"I feel absolutely suffocated among all this rubbish," says Roland. "And look at those awful color combinations. They clash so I can hardly sleep."

"Got to keep it all, have you?" I ask.

"Oh, yes," says Vera. "Uncle Peter plans to spend every Sunday with us. And it's his house, you know. He meant well, of course; but did you ever see such wretched taste?"

"I expect he's a good judge of leather," says I. "He looks kind of husky, too; as though he might last quite some time."

"Oh, years and years!" groans Roland. "Meanwhile we shall have to live on with—with this."

Before I left, though, Vera was struck with a brilliant idea. She's kind of bright, in her way. And when she explains it to Roland he almost cheers up.

"That's so!" says he. "We could hang draperies across the studio, about two-thirds of the way back, and pile most of it away every Monday morning. It would be a deuce of a job, though, getting it back again every Saturday."

"The exercise might be just what you need, dear," suggests Vera. "And think of the relief to our nerves and your temperament."

"Yes, I believe it would be worth while," says Roland. "Let's try it now."

And when I left he was struggling to balance the blue davenport on a brass-legged onyx table and a Circasian walnut stand. I'll bet it's the first real work he's tackled in years.

Somewhere ever since then, if I'm tempted to indulge in a blue Monday or a sour Saturday, I can always chirk up. All I have to do is to think of Roland and his bi-weekly movin' day. Generally the picture is good for a chuckle.

(Copyright, 1920, by Sewell Ford.)

The Draggled Flowers.

DR. H. C. BUMPUS, president of Tufts College, was telling stories about school teachers.

"A young and pretty girl teacher," he said, "had among her pupils a ragged little boy who brought her nearly every morning a bouquet of flowers."

"Sometimes the ragged boy brought roses, sometimes violets, sometimes lilies. The flowers were always a little draggled, but what did that matter? What mattered was the thought behind the gift rather than the gift itself. Still it was puzzling, all the same, to know where the boy's flowers all came from."

"One morning he brought her a great bouquet of mauve orchids, draggled as usual, and the pretty teacher, as she buried her face in them, could restrain her curiosity no longer."

"Tommy," she said, "where do you get all these nice flowers, anyhow? You don't steal them, I hope?"

"Steal 'em?" said Tommy. "Goodness, no, teacher! Pops an' Ashman."